

GRAND ROUNDS

Thursday, October 26th

HSC, LH 4 ([directions](#))

4:30-6:00pm

MEDICAL CLOWNING: An Introduction

Medical clowning is a therapeutic method aimed at helping children and adult patients through interactive humor, folly, and playful behavior. Since its inception as a profession in New York in 1986, medical clowning has become an intrinsic part of medical treatment in children's hospitals and pediatric wards in the U.S. (including 12 East Coast hospitals, among them Yale-New Haven, Johns Hopkins, and Memorial Sloan Kettering), in the majority of hospitals in Europe, Australia and Israel, and is spreading throughout the world. Medical clowning was found to facilitate patient cooperation and increase compliance in diverse patient populations - not only children, but also adults, including dialysis patients and those with cancer, dementia and psychiatric disorders. Clinical studies that will be reviewed in this lecture, have demonstrated that medical clowning is effective in reducing anxiety in preoperative pediatric patients and in many other stressful or painful procedures. In diagnostic radiology, interaction with medical clowns has eliminated the need for sedation in children. Clowns have also been deployed to disaster zones such as Haiti, Nepal, and recently, Houston. If medical clowning seems novel, ethnographic research suggests that in indigenous cultures, clowning and medicine often complement one another. Examples of Native American and South Pacific clown-healers will be discussed.

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Dr. Atay Citron

*Atay Citron is a theatre director, performance scholar, and associate professor at the University of Haifa, Israel. As chair of the Theatre Department (2004-2009), he created the first full-time academic training program for medical clowns. He studied the work of medical clowns in Israel and abroad, and the work of shamans and ritual clowns in the U.S., Korea, Bali and Papua New Guinea. He lectures and leads workshops in hospitals, conferences, and universities around the world. Currently, he studies the effects of therapeutic clowning on children with developmental disabilities. The results of his study on the manipulation of the placebo response by theatrical tools were published in *Frontiers in Psychology* (2016). Citron is the co-editor of *Performance Studies in Motion* (Bloomsbury, 2014). He holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Performance Studies, New York University. He served as artistic director of the Bat-Yam International Street Theatre Festival, the Acco Festival of Alternative Theatre, and the School of Visual Theatre. Currently, he leads the Ebisu Sign Language Theatre Laboratory, which is part of the Grammar of the Body Research Project (gramby.haifa.ac.il). He is a Schusterman Visiting Artist at Stony Brook University's Theatre Department for the fall of 2017.*